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COMMISSION



THE SIX FLAGS OF TEXAS

By

CARLOS E. CASTANEDA, PH. D.
LATIN-AMERICAN LIBRARIAN, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS,
AND CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION

Edited by REV. PAUL J. FOIK, C. S. C., PH. D.
Chairman of the Commission and President of the Society

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FOREWORD

The following address, entitled "The Six Flags of Texas," was delivered by Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda, the Director and Librarian of the Garcia Latin-American Library of the University of Texas. The occasion was the observance of Columbus Day, October 12, 1932, by the San Antonio Knights of Columbus Fourth Degree Assembly. These commemorative exercises took place at San José Mission, where a Solemn High Pontifical Field Mass was celebrated by His Excellency, Most Reverend Albert J. Daeger, O. F. M., D. D., late Archbishop of Santa Fe. Six permanent flagstaffs, each marked with a small bronze tablet, had previously been erected near the site of the new Franciscan monastery. The impressive ceremony of the various flag raisings was conducted by officers and soldiers attached to Fort Sam Houston. As each banner was unfurled, the speaker of the occasion summarized the history of that particular epoch.

The Chairman of the Texas Knights of Columbus Historical Commission wishes to express his gratitude and that of his associates to the Fourth Degree Assembly of San Antonio for making this publication and its distribution possible as a souvenir of the memorable historical event. He is also very much indebted to Dr. Carlos E. Castañeda for the kind permission, privilege and courtesy extended by him to the publisher of the Preliminary Studies of the Texas Catholic Historical Society for this excellent contribution, giving an introductory survey of these great epochs of Texas history.

PAUL J. FOIK, C. S. C., PH. D.,

Chairman of the Commission and President of the Society.



THE SIX FLAGS OF TEXAS

BY

CARLOS E. CASTANEDA, PH. D.

Extending from the turbid waters of the Rio Grande almost to the Mississippi, and from Oklahoma to the Gulf lies a vast expanse of territory, rich in fertile fields, large and bountiful rivers, broad plains, rolling hills, waving forests, and inviting harbors. Early in the sixteenth century, countless herds of buffalo roamed the prairies, wild game abounded everywhere, and thousands of native Americans lived in primitive savagery in these happy hunting grounds. Today, four hundred years later, this same territory has become the present state of Texas, first in size in the United States of America and fifth in population. Over its industrious citizens waves the glorious Stars and Stripes, symbol of liberty and peace.

Through the centuries there was waged, upon this privileged region on which nature lavished its bountiful gifts, where clear skies, bright sunshine, and gentle breezes seem to caress all living things and breed a spirit of unconquerable freedom, a gigantic struggle for the ultimate redemption of this great natural empire. In the struggle six mighty nations contested for supremacy. As the relentless hand of destiny moved ever forward the province finally came to form the largest, the richest, and the fairest state in the greatest democracy of our day.

Let us roll back the centuries and contemplate for a moment the mighty struggle that then took place. At that time we would see how western civilization was first brought to this vast garden spot welcoming man for his own benefit to transform its boundless resources into productivity and wealth. Soon would we behold how step by step the wilderness was reduced and the savages were led to a knowledge of God. Christian civilization gradually advanced, became firmly established and finally flourished throughout the land.

In the sixteenth century the mythical city of the Gran Quivira and the famed Seven Cities of Cibola were thought to be located within the bosom of this great domain. Rumors of their rich-

ness and splendor spread irresistably until they reached the mighty city of the Montezumas, Spain's seat of power in North America. The news and reports of fabulous wealth aroused the cupidity of the conquistadores and whetted their appetites for new adventures. Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, one of the four sole survivors of the ill-fated Narvaez Expedition wrecked upon the Gulf coast, was the first European to behold the natural wonders of Texas soil, to traverse its broad plains, and to be the recipient of the spontaneous hospitality of its natives. Years before, other of his countrymen, under the leadership of Pineda had sailed along the coast from Florida to Tampico and had drawn up in 1519 the first map of the Texas coast. After untold hardships Cabeza de Vaca, this man of iron, made his way to Culiacan on the far distant Pacific coast from where he went to Mexico City, carrying news of the country visited in his wanderings. Although he did not return to Texas as he had wished, he lived to carry the flag of Spain to remote parts of South America. This characteristic figure of the Spanish conquistador, like a herald announcing the beginning of a new era, appeared upon the stage of history as the curtain rose on the great drama, and then passed on.

Soon after the news of the mythical kingdoms had reached Mexico, other Europeans went forth in quest of them and again set foot upon Texas soil. The unfortunate Coronado Expedition, which came to conquer the Gran Quivira as if going on a festive march, was sadly disillusioned and suffered the pains of the damned before its decimated survivors found their way out of the broad plains of West Texas in the Llano Estacado. Ambitious historians of neighboring states have taken the foot-sore and worn-out men of Coronado as far afield as present day Kansas, Oklahoma, and eastern New Mexico, but more recent investigations tend to confirm the opinion that Coronado and his men never left the confines of the state. But it seems that wise Providence defeated the purpose of these unscrupulous and greedy adventurers who, though accompanied by missionaries, at heart were not sincerely interested in the only justifiable cause for the subjugation of the natives: their conversion to Christianity. Texas was to wait for several years before a more serious attempt to occupy its rich lands was made.

New Mexico was formally occupied towards the close of the

sixteenth century. Through its settlers new rumors concerning the Great Kingdom of the Tejas and the wealth of their province reached viceregal officials. Reports of the desire of this people to become Christians sounded as a trumpet call upon the pious ears of the worthy sons of Saint Francis in New Spain. Gradually the reports became more frequent, and at last there came news of the most singular incident in the history of missionary endeavor in the New World.

One day there came a delegation of Tejas and Jumano Indians to Spanish officials to ask that missionaries be sent amongst their people to teach and baptize them. When inquiry was made as to what had prompted them to make this petition, as to how a desire for instruction in the Christian faith had been developed, the Indians told a simple story. A lady in blue, the now famous Maria of Agreda, her face beaming with kindness and love as the sparkling stars of the firmament, had frequently come to them on the wings of the air to instruct them. It was she who had commanded them to go to the frontier Spanish settlements to ask for missionaries to teach all their people.

This portentous event fired the zeal of the Franciscans with an unquenchable desire to carry to this people the comforts of religion. Had not God made patent his desire? They were not to rest until the command of the Master was carried out. The woman in blue thus presaged the dawn of a new era for the Tejas Indians and was to be the determining force in the ultimate permanent occupation of this vast and immensely rich empire marked in this singular way as a chosen field for evangelization. Love of glory, of adventure, of gain, and of advantage, and other worldly passions were not sufficient. It was the simple and loving faith of the Franciscan missionaries, who, utilizing these baser motives in their noble enterprise, were at last to be responsible for the founding of the first missions in East Texas, almost upon the banks of the mighty monarch of North American rivers, within sight of the farthest French outpost in Louisiana. As a last resort, despairing of the apathy of Spanish officials, they were to recur to an unfailing source of action, the fear of foreign aggression.

We come therefore, in the course of this rapid survey of the history of Texas, in which the endless procession of time is made to pass before our eyes like an unfolding panorama, to the first

and only actual occupation of Texas soil by the French. It was the adventurous La Salle, whether by design or accident, who raised the flag of France on Matagorda Bay in 1685, while in search of the mouth of the Mississippi. In vain did he try to reach either the frontier settlements of New Spain or the mouth of the great river. Bravely he struggled against adversity, only to find an inglorious death at the hands of his own men. The leader dead, the little colony on Garcitas Creek fell an easy prey to Indian savagery. Four years later De Leon was to discover the charred remains of the ill-starred settlement and one of his men, moved by the pathetic figure of a half buried woman, was to write the first elegy composed on Texas soil. No serious effort was made by France to reoccupy Texas. In later years the rivalry of the two powerful pioneers was to be confined to disputes over the boundary and illicit trade. Except for a brief incursion in 1719, when the French drove the Spaniards out of East Texas, the French flag was not again to wave over the state. It was to this brief incursion, however, that we owe the establishment of this mission of San José by the saintly Margil, who, choosing this delightful spot on the banks of the San Antonio River, laid the foundations for the mission that was to become the queen of Texas missions. The Franciscans have now returned after an absence of more than a century to labor anew in Texas.

The brief and tragic episode of La Salle's futile attempt to establish a settlement in Texas marks the close of the prologue in the great drama. Spain was henceforth to occupy Texas and to hold it in order to prevent other nations from repeating the attempt of the French. As a result of this determination the missionaries, whose zeal and ardent desire to convert the natives had only been inflamed by the prolonged delay, were to have their opportunity at last.

With incredible rapidity two missions were established in East Texas within two years after the discovery of La Salle's colony. But the course of Christianization was to be rudely interrupted in 1693 and the missionaries were to be forced to abandon their beloved neophytes. Again there was a lull in Texas colonization. Again the Indians were left undisturbed by Europeans for a time. Without the paternal care of the missionaries, they soon aban-

doned the newly cultivated fields, forgot the lessons learned, and reverted to absolute savagery.

It was the French who again moved the Spanish authorities to occupy Texas. In 1714 a certain St. Denis, accompanied by a few companions, unexpectedly appeared on the Rio Grande to establish trade relations with the commandant at the presidio of San Juan Bautista. The viceregal government of New Spain was much disturbed when it heard of this incident. St. Denis was sent to Mexico as a prisoner, and measures were immediately taken to prevent such incursions in the future.

The zestful Franciscans now urged again the importance of reoccupying Texas and of converting the natives, making them by this means subjects of his most Christian majesty, the king of Spain, and safeguarding thereby all possibility of French aggression. Father Hidalgo, who had been forced to abandon his beloved Tejas Indians in East Texas in 1663, had patiently watched and waited from the frontier of Coahuila for an opportunity to return to his dearly beloved Tejas Indians. His love was reciprocated. When St. Denis passed through the Tejas tribe he was enjoined by these grateful Indians to entreat the Spaniards to send them missionaries, particularly to send them back Father Hidalgo, their true friend and companion.

Soon an expedition was organized under Domingo Ramón. With sixty-five men, he crossed the Rio Grande, passed by the site of present San Antonio, noting its suitable location for a permanent settlement, and proceeded to East Texas to refound the missions previously established there from 1689 to 1693. From the time of the Ramón Expedition dates the permanent Spanish occupation of Texas. Two years later Alarcón, the new governor, formally established a settlement in the present site of San Antonio as a midway station, reorganizing the few scattered settlers that since two years before had taken their abode in the vicinity, and formally naming the temporary mission of San Antonio de Padua, originally founded by Father Olivares, San Antonio de Valero in honor of the ruling viceroy. From this new center of activity, destined to become with time the most important Spanish settlement within the state, the circle of influence of Spanish civilization and of missionary activity was to spread gradually to Los Adaes, Bahía del Espíritu Santo, Nacogdoches, San Sabá, the missions of the upper Nueces, and

to all the eastern tribes that made up the Asinay Confederacy, erroneously called the Tejas.

The history of the next sixty years is replete with the heroic sacrifices of the brown-robed Franciscans, who labored long and faithfully to bring the roving children of the plains to a realization of our Christian faith to teach them the habits and customs of civilized life. Every mission, and there were many founded during their period, became a vocational school where the Indians were gathered and taught not only the fundamental truths of religion but the rudiments of civilized life. The missionaries themselves set them an example. With plow or hoe in hand they showed the Indians how to till the soil, how to plant the seed, how to raise the crop. In the long winter days the neophytes learned manual trades, repairing the rude furniture of the mission and their own quarters. Under the direction of the kindly *padres* they learned to carve stone and wood, to weave, to make sandals, to sew, to mend things, and to play various instruments. Each mission had its armory, its carpenter shop, its blacksmith shop, its loom, and its amusement room where the Indians played and danced on feast days. It was in this manner that the great task of civilizing the Indians was carried on. In addition to their cultivated fields, well-kept orchards where excellent fruits were raised, and their tanneries and workshops, the Indians of the missions had their cattle, their stock, and their sheep.

But this growth was not all a garden of roses. Many were the hardships, the trials and the tribulations which the unselfish and suffering soldiers of Christ had to endure in the daily routine of their simple lives. During these sixty years they were often forced to carry on their work without the full cooperation of the officials, and frequently against their open opposition. The Indians were fickle by nature. Unaccustomed to regular work and habits of industry they soon tired, became discouraged and ran away. Sickness was a constant source of trouble for the missionaries. The Indian medicine men, who saw their power destroyed by the new order of things, naturally hinted that the epidemics were due to the waters of baptism. Against this and many other influences, that were constantly undoing their work, the missionaries labored patiently, with love in their hearts, with faith and hope in their souls for ultimate success. Be it said to the honor

of the sons of Saint Francis that, through it all, they never faltered. They worked with exemplary Christian resignation, to bring to the fold through patience, kindness, and love the thousands of Indians that roamed the vast plains. Before their task was half accomplished, some of them made the supreme sacrifice and gladly gave their lives for the love of God. The Texas historian cannot pass in silence the heroic virtues of the saintly Margil, founder of San José Mission, nor the martyred Fray Alonso Giraldo de Terreros and Fray Santiestebán, murdered by the infuriated Comanches at San Sabá. One fell at the foot of the altar, the other at the gate of the desecrated mission. Thus "they sealed their work with their blood" affirms the illustrious historian of their order, Fray Juan Agustín Morfi.

The long Spanish period during which the real work of civilization was carried on by the Church and the missionaries lasted from the beginning of the eighteenth century to almost the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth. Early in 1810 a struggle for independence began in Mexico, led by Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, curate of Dolores. His emissary to the United States of America made his way to Texas in an effort to reach Washington and secure the much needed aid and cooperation of this great country, which had so recently succeeded in obtaining its independence from Great Britain. Unfortunately he was captured in this very city of San Antonio. In 1812 the liberals temporarily gained control of affairs in Texas; then followed the brutal and bloody days of the Gutierrez-Magee filibustering expedition, whose short triumph ended with defeat by Arredondo on the Medina in 1814. Texas remained loyal to Spain for the remainder of the struggle. In 1821, with the proclamation of the Plan de Iguala by Iturbide, Mexico became an independent nation.

The Mexican flag was now raised over the old ramparts of the Presidio of San Antonio, where the Spanish flag had waved so long. A new era began for Mexico and for Texas. It was during this period which we are now entering that the Anglo-American colonization was to take place. Before Mexico had actually won its independence, Moses Austin, a former resident of Missouri, had applied for and obtained a grant of land wherein to establish a colony in Texas. But he did not live to carry out his enterprise. This hazardous undertaking was to

fall upon the shoulders of a young man destined to become truly the father of Anglo-Texas. It was Stephen F. Austin, son of Moses, who undertook to carry out the colonization contract made by his father. He thus became the first great empresario.

Mexico adopted a liberal policy towards American immigration at first. During the early years of Mexican independence the settlement of Texas was rapid. Colonies sprang up over night. American pioneers streamed into the promised land in an endless procession. As the newcomers were brought into closer contact with the older Spanish settlers and their relations with Mexican officials became more intimate, it was only natural that differences should arise between them. The American colonists were aggressive, self-assertive, impatient of authority or of restraint. The Spanish settlers were passive, somewhat apathetic, law-abiding, good-natured. The breach consequently widened and distrust grew. The new colonists became exasperated at the repeated efforts made by Mexico to prevent an open secession and the possible loss of one of its states. The law of April 6, 1830, marked the beginning of a new era of mutual discord and suspicion. Mexico no longer favored American colonization. The American pioneer carried in his hand the ever ready rifle which he used with deadly precision, and in his pocket he placed his own law. It was not long before a cleavage occurred. The Fredonian revolt of the Edwards was a premature attempt to separate from Mexico. Austin realized the situation and wisely helped the Mexican authorities to suppress the movement. This act saved the infant colonies until a better day.

Causes for misunderstanding and friction continued to grow. By 1835 Texas was in open revolt against Mexico. The movement that began as a petition for distinct statehood ended in one for absolute and complete independence from Mexico.

The struggle that ensued was as bloody as it was short. Santa Anna, recently proclaimed dictator in Mexico, began immediate preparations to subdue the rebels. At the head of a formidable army for those days he crossed the Rio Grande in the early part of 1836 and laid siege to the Alamo. After a heroic defense by its reduced garrison, the Alamo fell on March 6th, and every man was put to the sword. Before the smoke from the smoldering ruins cleared, came news of the Goliad massacre. Panic seized the settlers, and they fled in every direction. Houston,

at the head of a small and demoralized force of Texans, slowly retreated before the overpowering troops of Santa Anna. At last he took a position just beyond the San Jacinto, near the site of present day Houston, to make one last stand and to protect, as far as possible, the retreat of the fleeing colonists. Santa Anna arrived at the battlefield flushed with victory. After burning the rebel capital, Washington on the Brazos, he felt certain of ultimate success. So great was his confidence that after taking one look at the positions of the Texans, he decided there was no hurry and proceeded to take a *siesta*. When he awoke his troops were in full flight, victory had deserted his standards, and he had not only lost an army but his own liberty as well.

A new flag, the flag of the Republic of Texas, now waved triumphantly over the land. A new star, the lone star of the empire state, had risen from the smoke and din of battle and its banner was proudly unfurled in this domain that had heretofore successively seen three other flags displayed. From 1836 to 1845, when Texas was annexed to the Union, this new symbol of freedom was to proclaim to the world the birth of a sovereign state.

The era of the Republic beheld a tremendous increase in population. In less than ten years the number of people rose from approximately thirty thousand to one hundred thousand, thanks to the unprecedented immigration from the United States. New settlements were established in the region north of the old San Antonio-Nacogdoches road, new farms began to dot the country west of San Antonio, and the areas between the Red River and the coast and between the Sabine and the Nueces were rapidly put under cultivation and many villages appeared. Amidst the attendant confusion of readjustment, of land speculation, of Indian depredations, and of the constant menace of Mexican invasion, steady progress was made in reducing the wilderness and in laying down the foundations for the future greatness of the state. Among the many matters that called for solution the question of public instruction was very important. The congress of the new Republic laid the foundation for this future educational development by making the first grant of land for that purpose. The picturesque Lamar, with a facility for sonorous phrases, declared in his message of 1838: "A cultivated mind is the guardian genius of Democracy. . . . It is the only

dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security that freemen desire."

It soon became evident, however, that the infant Republic could not long endure without the protecting hand of one or more of the older nations. Its immense resources, the value of its raw products to a new and rapidly developing industrial world, the threatening attitude of Mexico, and above all its proximity to the United States along with the character of its institutions, made it almost a necessity for the young Republic either to join the United States or accept a protectorate that would guarantee its integrity.

The majority of the people at heart favored annexation. Thus negotiations were finally concluded late in 1845 and on February 16, 1846, "amid the booming of cannon and the mingled smiles and tears of Texan patriots, the flag of the Republic . . . was lowered" and the broad banner of the United States of America was unfurled to the winds. It was on this occasion that President Jones uttered the impressive words that marked the passing away of the short-lived Republic. "The final act in this great drama is now performed," he declared, "the Republic of Texas is no more."

After becoming a state of the Union progress was even more rapid than before. Public order was established; the Indian problem was partially settled by the establishment of reservations, the aid of federal troops, and the organization of state rangers; the land system was reorganized and liberal bounties were given to those who had helped achieve the independence of the state; large grants of land were again made for educational purposes; railway construction was actively encouraged; and the population increased from one hundred thousand to over four hundred thousand on the eve of the war between the states.

But we cannot tarry on this early period of development. In 1860 there were ominous signs of an approaching storm that was to shake the very foundations of the American Union and test all the powers of the federal government. In the great struggle that followed the election of Lincoln, Texas took her place by the side of the Confederacy, and in March, 1861, the federal troops within the state evacuated their posts. The sixth and last flag other than that of the Union now waved over the land. The five years of the war were hard and bitter years of trials and

sorrows. From fifty to sixty thousand men saw service under the colors of the Confederacy. But far from the actual theatre of active engagements, Texas was spared the destruction wrought by battles and the drain of marching armies.

In 1865, at the close of the terrible strife, Texas was in a chaotic state. Hungry veterans swarmed the country and deeds of violence were common. The Stars and Stripes waved serenely over the land once more. The dispossessed slave-holder, the demoralized farmer, the artisan and the tradesman, buckled down to the business of reconstruction with a stern determination during the trying days that followed the war. The spirit of the old pioneer days again stirred the people of Texas to greater efforts. Slowly, under adverse conditions, the readjustments were made, agriculture again flourished, the cattle industry developed and grew to be one of the principal sources of wealth; and West Texas became the home of the romantic cowboy and the picturesque long-horn. Railroads spread their network over the state from north to south and from east to west; irrigation made possible the cultivation of thousands of new acres; and immigration continued to pour into the state, increasing its population and furnishing the necessary man power to develop the diverse resources of the state.

But it is not the purpose of this address to outline the history of the unprecedented growth and development of the great state of Texas since the days of the Civil War. Suffice it to say that today Texas is the largest state in the Union and that its untold resources will make it the richest and most prosperous in a day not so far distant. But it is significant that the pioneers in the real beginnings of civilization in the state were the humble and pious Franciscan missionaries who almost three centuries ago, when there were no material incentives to stimulate interest in the country, braved the hardships of the wilderness, risked their lives, and gave the best they had in them to save the souls of the natives and to implant the seeds of Christian civilization in Texas, the land of God's special predilection. May the Stars and Stripes wave over the state forever, a guarantee of justice and liberty!





